Australian Bureau of Statistics

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How to measure social capital:ABS

A new framework for measuring social capital was released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). How social capital might be measured has become a focus of researchers and policy analysts as they study individual and social wellbeing and the characteristics and functioning of families and community networks.

The publication, **Measuring Social Capital - An Australian Framework and Indicators**, provides a comprehensive description of the meaning of social capital and the way its various dimensions might be measured. The publication has been developed in consultation with a wide range of government and non-government agencies and research institutions. The paper is a contribution to national and international work on measuring social capital.

This framework is one of several produced recently by the ABS to simplify analysis of complicated topics. Such frameworks enable planners and policy makers to make better use of all the available statistics, and help the ABS to address gaps in data coverage.

The ABS has adopted the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) definition of social capital: "networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups". This OECD definition is emerging as a common basis for international comparability.

The framework presents the various elements of social capital with possible statistical indicators and data items. It has four dimensions: Network qualities (Norms and Common purpose), Network structure, Network transactions and Network types.

The ABS invites comment and discussion on the social capital framework and the possible indicators and data items.

Further details are in **Measuring Social Capital - An Australian Framework and Indicators** (cat. no. 1378.0).

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